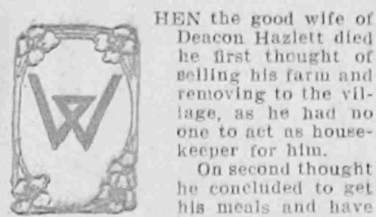


Short Stories that Interest

A DEACON'S COURTSHIP



WHEN the good wife of Deacon Hazlett died first thought of selling his farm and removing to the village, as he had no one to net as house-keeper for him. On second thought he concluded to get his meals and have his washing done at so much per week at widow Miller's, who owned the farm opposite his. The deacon was 45 and the widow 40, and no one saw any impropriety in the arrangement made.

His Engagement

IT was not that Diana Wales did not love Guy Streator. To the contrary Diana often inclined to the belief that she did. The trouble was that she was not quite certain and for more than a year she had kept Guy waiting for his answer while she made up her mind.

"It's this way," she had explained. "About once a week I begin to wonder if it is love or just liking that I feel for you. I should not want to marry you only to find out that it was not love after all. I'm sure you would not want to marry a woman who did not love you."

"I'd be content with a wife who loved me six days out of seven as a starter," conceded Streator cheerfully but Diana frowned reprovingly. "I did not say that I loved you on the other days," she reminded him. "I said that every little while I doubt it was nice of you to think of me."

ed that I loved you at all." "Don't you think it is about time that you came to some conclusion?" he asked gently. "It is more than a year ago that you promised to give me an answer soon."

"But how can I answer when I do not know what to say?" she cried. "I do want to answer you, Guy, but I must have time to decide."

"But if you wait too long perhaps I shall change my mind," Guy teased. "There is that girl in Buffalo, you know. I always was fond of Clemence Graham. Perhaps I shall."

The speculation as to his actions was stopped by the pressure of a soft palm against his lips. "Don't talk like that," begged Diana, and for the moment she was very certain that she more than merely liked the decidedly good-looking young man who was so persistent.

not marry her? There was no hurry, however. The deacon was getting chubbier and his shirt stretched to his satisfaction and it seemed a pity to interrupt the program. The widow was a good deal of a hustler, too, as he had come to know, and as long as he was only a boarder he would not feel privileged to hustle him.

The corn was only knee high when the deacon came to his decision, but it was ready to be cut and shocked when he was ready to take a step further. He might not have done it, but he had not Deacon Brockway, who was also a widower, come driving out to the farm much oftener than seemed necessary.

His excuses were that he wanted to buy hogs, chickens, cows and other things, but he never bought. He simply dropped his hoe and leaned his back against the fence to digest the thought, and after a quarter of an hour he found himself rather pleased with it.

He had known Mrs. Miller for six or seven years. He had been one of the pathbearers at her husband's funeral. He knew that she was one of the best cooks in the county and always pared the potatoes thin and saved the apple cores, and that her farm was worth \$50 an acre. Why

he might. Perhaps even when he had spoken so lightly of Miss Graham he had been engaged to her. He had visited Buffalo several times of late. He had told Diana that these were business trips, but she was well acquainted with his affairs and she knew of no business connections he had in Buffalo.

Now Bixley had gone to Buffalo to visit his mother, and of course he had seen the Grahams, for it was while she was on a visit to the Bixleys that Guy had met Miss Graham.

Plainly Bixley had been told of Guy's engagement to Clemence and had wired his congratulations. It was probable that had she not seen the telegram she might not have been told of it for some time.

The first flood of bitterness over, Diana could only sit quietly and try to realize the fact that she had lost Guy. She could not blame him. He had waited now for almost 18 months. Guy was anxious to have a home of his own and Clemence Graham was a very pretty girl, Diana assured herself.

She gave no heed to the call to dinner and she was still sitting in the dark parlor when Guy came in. The maid had received orders always to admit him without announcement and Diana had not thought to tell her otherwise.

There was custard pie on the table. Custard pie was the deacon's strong hold. He had that in mind when he decided on marriage. He had eaten of the solids and one piece of pie when the solicitous widow glanced over to his plate and said:

"Try one more piece of the custard pie, deacon." "I don't care if I do," was the reply, and he tried it. It seemed to just fit. He was leaning back in his chair with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest when the widow glanced over again and said:

"I took special pains with that pie, deacon, on your account. Let me help you to another piece." "If you don't mind, widder, I never heard that custard pie hurt anybody." "But you are paying your board, you know."

That gave the deacon his cue. He devoured the third piece of pie, looked longingly at what was left, and then brushed the crumbs from his vest and said:

"Yes, widder, I'm a boarder, but there are times when I wish I wasn't. There are times when I wish I was closer to a boarder. In fact, Mrs. Miller, I believe the best thing we can do is to hitch horses. You need me and I need you. You've had a chance to watch me, and I've had a chance to watch you, and I guess we won't make any mistake."

The widow was clearing off the table by this time, but she paused to blush and cast down her eyes. They always do that, no matter how often they are proposed to. She didn't say right out that she'd sent the deacon and he glad to do it, but her actions left him to draw a favorable inference and he drew it.

Three days later, when Deacon Brockway came driving out to buy some more hogs, he was received with coldness. Deacon Hazlett met him in front of the house and said:

"I don't think you need waste any more time around here." "Why, what's the matter?" "I've asked her myself, and she's going to be mine."

"Then you are a blamed mean man!" "You go on!" Just what the widow expected after that proposal cannot be stated for certain, but she surely had a right to

expect the wedding to come off on Thanksgiving Day. Why not? Then she had a right to look forward to Christmas and New Years, but disappointment was her lot again.

Having asked for her heart and hand and received them, the deacon seemed content to keep on paying board. About the only change that took place in him was the fact that he now helped himself to a third piece of custard pie and made no excuses.

The widow took pains to read him all the wedding announcements in the county paper, but he received them with nothing more than a "Hum!" There were times when she determined to have the day settled, but she always backed out when the moment arrived to speak.

April had come, and the state of uncertainty continued, when Mrs. Miller's sister arrived from a town for three years, and then I raised him.

"But I can't ask him when we are to be married," was the protest. "You needn't say a word. Just go right along as humble as a cat and let me do the planning. I like the deacon. He's a good man, but he needs a scare."

"Maybe he'll ask me to set the day for the first of May." "And maybe he'll keep right on till he's 70 and never say a word about it. Sarah, everybody thinks a widow as sharp as a knife, but they are mistaken. They haven't got the gunption of spring chickens."

Three days later Deacon Brockway came driving along the road with a grin on his face. On this day he did not stop, but on the next he did. Deacon Hazlett saw him from the fields, and he didn't get up in time to say anything.

He drove past the next day and the next (and each time he signaled the house with his handkerchief). Deacon Hazlett was now in a perturbed state of mind. He sulked, but he asked no questions. It was apparent that he was jealous.

On the days that Deacon Brockway did not drive past the farm the two women drove into the village, and the sister finally announced that the trap was ready for the victim, and added:

"Sarah Miller, if you are not a married woman within 24 hours, then I'll give up that I don't even know enough to write out a dishcloth and wind up the clock."

"But is it Christian-like to deceive?" asked the widow as she felt the prick of conscience. "It is Christian-like for every woman to get a husband, and if the man is an old poke and has to be hurried up that isn't her fault."

That day Deacon Brockway stopped at the house and got safely away again. Also, just at dusk, he was seen driving past at full speed.

Deacon Hazlett gritted his teeth and made up his mind that within the next day or two he would have a talk with the widow and demand explanations. He was too late, however.

At 10 o'clock that evening, just as he had got to bed, there came a pounding on the door and a voice cried out:

"O, deacon, but I can't find Sarah." "Confound the luck!" blurted the great artist as he tossed his brushes about in confusion.

"What is the trouble, dear?" asked his little wife. "Why, here I had a beautiful picture of Chicago and now I've spotted black paint over half of it. The work is ruined."

"Cheer up, dear. Just rub the black all over the canvas until nothing is visible and then call it a picture of Pittsburg."

"Quarters and Halves. These apartments used to be called 'bachelor quarters,' remarked the caller. 'What are the occupants?'

"And why not?" "Because they all have better halves."

"Strong Combination. Gunner—'Big wedding down the way.' Guyer—'That's so? Name the lucky parties.' Gunner—'Why, the well-known dentist married the pretty manicurist.' Guyer—'Indeed? Going through life by tooth and nail, eh?'

"Soot Atmosphere. 'Confound the luck!' blurted the great artist as he tossed his brushes about in confusion. 'What is the trouble, dear?' asked his little wife.

"Why, here I had a beautiful picture of Chicago and now I've spotted black paint over half of it. The work is ruined."

"Cheer up, dear. Just rub the black all over the canvas until nothing is visible and then call it a picture of Pittsburg."

"Quarters and Halves. These apartments used to be called 'bachelor quarters,' remarked the caller. 'What are the occupants?'

"And why not?" "Because they all have better halves."

"Strong Combination. Gunner—'Big wedding down the way.' Guyer—'That's so? Name the lucky parties.' Gunner—'Why, the well-known dentist married the pretty manicurist.' Guyer—'Indeed? Going through life by tooth and nail, eh?'

"Soot Atmosphere. 'Confound the luck!' blurted the great artist as he tossed his brushes about in confusion. 'What is the trouble, dear?' asked his little wife.

earth! Which way did they go?" "Toward the village. They were to get married at the inn there. O, deacon, if you overtake them don't don't."

But the deacon had rushed past her out of the house, and was on his way to the barn. Three minutes later he was astride of the old mare and a sending her along the highway at a pace she hadn't struck for five years before.

It was three miles to the village, and he met just one team on the way. The driver called out a hello to him, but the deacon answered: "You go to the devil!" and continued the pace. The inn was gained. There sat the widow. There sat Deacon Brockway. There sat a minister.

With one awful yank Deacon Brockway went whirling out doors. Then the widow was lifted to her feet, the minister was told to go ahead or meet his doom, and widow Miller was Mrs. Deacon Hazlett and on her way home within the next 10 minutes.

The Lady's Name

HIS will mean a great deal to you, won't it?" said the girl. She glanced smilingly at the tall young man, with the cheerful, freckled face, who perched on the piazza rail, swinging his legs idly to and fro in the mottled shadows cast by the

ivy vine. "Well, I should say so, Helen," he replied. "Frankly, I'm nervous. For the first time in my life I'm under a suspense that I can scarcely endure."

"O, Radway & Co. are sure to offer you a good price for the patent. They can't afford to do otherwise, I'm sure."

"Lord, I hope so," said he, fervently. "I've put five good years of my life into this thing. I've slaved and worried and all but starved."

"But you've succeeded at last. That method of annealing glass should make your everlasting fortune."

"Heavens knows, it can't come too

back in a few minutes," which was flung over his shoulder.

She watched him turn through the gate, with a sudden sinking of her heart. Somehow in these last few minutes it seemed as if he had gone completely out of her life—as if in the twinkling of an eye, all their years of comradeship counted for naught, and that he was a stranger to her.

Of course he would marry. She had always counted upon such a contingency; but now that it was here she felt strangely oppressed—very much alone.

A tear plashed onto the embroidery. She brushed it angrily away, then, with a broken sob she laid her head upon the railing and wept without restraint.

She had dried her eyes and was working away industriously, quite as if nothing unusual had happened, when he came up the path again.

"Nothing doing," he announced. "Got a letter from 'em, but they say they haven't come to any decision. They're making tests. Going to wire

Let's Laugh Again

No Social Standing. "What do you think, Marie?" exclaimed the steel magnate. "Our son Reginald writes that he is on his wedding trip and his wife is a paragon."

"A Paragon?" echoed his wife. "Dear me! I can't recall the name of Paragon in the social register. You must look her up at once, John, and see if Reginald has disgraced himself by marrying into an inferior family."

Slight Mistake. "My poor man," said the old lady with the corkscrew curls, "I was told that this was the place to find the 'great unshaved'."

"Almost right, but not quite, mum," responded the dusky wayfarer who was waiting his turn. "Dis is de place to find de 'great unshaved'."

"The 'great unshaved'?" "Yes, mum, dis is a barbers' college and today is free shaving day."

Often Lectured. During the reunion of students the party began to recall the absent members.

"And what ever became of Bilkins?" asked one. "Do you remember big and lazy Bilkins, who would never listen to a lecture?" "Yes," replied another with a smile, "but Bilkins listens to a great many lectures now."

"Indeed? Reformed, eh?" "No," he replied. "Reformed, eh?"

Rather Musical. Stubb—"Among other things found in the stomach of a 'chuman' creature was a coil of piano wire. Now what do you suppose he swallowed that for?"

Pertinent Query. Professor—"How long can a man live without brains?" Bright Pupil—"I don't know, sir. How old are you?"

A War Relic. "This ring," said the maiden fair, "is very dear to me; 'Tis a relic of a bloodless war—My first engagement. See?"

Soot Atmosphere. "Confound the luck!" blurted the great artist as he tossed his brushes about in confusion.

"What is the trouble, dear?" asked his little wife. "Why, here I had a beautiful picture of Chicago and now I've spotted black paint over half of it. The work is ruined."

"Cheer up, dear. Just rub the black all over the canvas until nothing is visible and then call it a picture of Pittsburg."

"Quarters and Halves. These apartments used to be called 'bachelor quarters,' remarked the caller. 'What are the occupants?'

"And why not?" "Because they all have better halves."

"Strong Combination. Gunner—'Big wedding down the way.' Guyer—'That's so? Name the lucky parties.' Gunner—'Why, the well-known dentist married the pretty manicurist.' Guyer—'Indeed? Going through life by tooth and nail, eh?'



"WON'T YOU WAIT, MY DEAR, UNTIL HE SPEAKS?"

Oh, These Styles!

YOUNG woman in a correctly trailing, lanky gown and the tremendous furs and mountain plateau hat who had arrived to call on her friend was greeted in an abstract manner by that young woman, her hostess held in her hand a large sheet of paper and a pencil.

"I've the greatest piece of news to tell you," began the girl in the trailing gown. "It's—"

"I've been robbed!" "Gracious!" cried the caller. "Who—"

"As nearly as I can figure it out," began the young woman with the paper and pencil. "I've lost just 89 hours and 65 minutes—no, that's wrong—98 hours and a day and a half extra—well, anyhow, if I don't know exactly what I've been robbed of I know it's a bad case of robbery. Somebody in Paris is responsible!"

The girl in the trailing gown looked perplexed and a trifle nervous. "Why, May?" she murmured. "Do you feel quite well, dear? Your head—why don't you lie down for a while? Maybe it would make you feel better?"

"Somebody in Paris has robbed me," declared the hostess, firmly. "Why, you can remember the time, when you, when you allowed only about an hour to get ready for a party? And in 20 minutes you could change into street clothes? And it took about five minutes to do up your hair? Dear, dear! Those were happy days!"

I just brushed it all together on top of my head and gave it two or three twists, jammed in some hairpins, fluffed it out loosely around the front and there I was and a pretty good-looking piece of work, if I do say it! Now, Adele, you know perfectly well the girl isn't born today who can arrange her coiffure inside of 40 minutes and if she stops to curl her hair it takes an hour!

"First you have to divide it all around, getting it tangled in the comb and sidecombs where they will do the most damage and sometimes before you do that you put on an invisible net which is indeed invisible when you are trying to get it on your head."

"After you finish doing all this, you are ready to take a long, refreshing nap, but you can't because it would muss your hair!"

SO THEY LEFT IN THE AUTOMOBILE.

soon. I've got just \$2.17 in the world to see this thing through on."

The girl laughed. "Never mind, Bob. You'll hear before long. I have an intuition that won't be denied that they are going to offer you more than you can afford to do otherwise, I'm sure."

"I hope your intuition isn't playing you tricks," said he. He plucked a sprig of the vine and began abstractly stripping the leaves from it.

"As you say, this thing means a heap to me."

"Of course it does!" "More than you realize, I think."

"How so?" He looked at her keenly. "You and I have been the best of pals, Helen," said he. "I'm going to confide a little secret to you."

"Is it safe?" she asked, mockingly. "I'll take a chance. Say, if they offer me \$10,000 or better for this patent of mine, I'm going to take the yoke—matrimony, you know."

The girl started. Her fingers tightened about the embroidery frame. The man on the rail seemed utterly oblivious to the fact that her face turned rather white.